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WHA/AND FOR SHELBY SMITH-WILSON AND LOURDES CUE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/14/2012
TAGS: [KNNP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SP](#)
SUBJECT: DEMARCHE: IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM, VENEZUELA
GREATER CONCERN THAN BOLIVIA

REF: A. SECSTATE 151192
[1](#)B. SECSTATE 154674

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Hugo Llorens for Reasons 1.4 (B)
and (D)

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Poloff met November 14 with Deputy Director General for Andean Countries Ramon Santos and Deputy Director General for Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Ignacio Sanchez de Lerin Garcia-Ovies regarding U.S. concerns over Bolivia's support for Iran's nuclear program (ref A). Sanchez de Lerin seemed well versed in Iranian violations, but downplayed U.S. concerns regarding Bolivian support for Ahmadi-Nejad. Both officials described Venezuela as more worrisome than Bolivia on both proliferation and political fronts. The meeting also provided an opportunity to discuss shared concerns about democracy in Venezuela (ref B). END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Iran was seeking support throughout the region, Sanchez de Lerin observed, and targeting or gaining traction in particular with Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Venezuela. In the case of Nicaragua, he said, where Iran was offering minimal cooperation and support, a far greater issue than weapons of mass destruction was trafficking in small arms and related violence. Neither was Bolivia a great concern for Spain, in terms of proliferation. He dismissed U.S. concerns regarding October statements as more likely a matter of Venezuelan influence than of Bolivian ideology. In any event, Santos said Spain was unlikely to take Bolivia to task over Iran. Though Bolivian President Morales did not "control his words," Spain tended to view Bolivia as the EU does and, with other Europeans, would continue monitoring Bolivian actions to assure themselves Bolivia did not cross any lines. Sanchez de Lerin said Bolivia's support for Iran had been "discreet." For now, Santos noted, Bolivia and Iran do not have diplomatic relations. Spain would have to see whether rhetorical statements led to action that merited additional concern. Venezuela, of the three regional supporters, was most worrisome in that it was better positioned to command attention and deploy resources. Santos nonetheless questioned whether it was practical to go against Chavez on Iran and questioned whether such pressure would yield positive results.

[1](#)3. (C) Regarding Venezuela, Santos shared our concerns about the direction of proposed constitutional reforms, citing especially limitations on freedom of expression, but declined to engage directly on the referendum issue. He played down fears about expropriation of private properties and gave little credence to suggestions that Chavez was positioning himself to be President for life, even as he noted the trend toward increasing centralization of power in Venezuela.
AGUIRRE